



# Political economy and the emergence of a hybrid mode of governance of tourism planning



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## HIGHLIGHTS

- Modes of overall governance and of tourism governance vary between destinations.
- Combined analysis of tourism governance modes and political economy in Hong Kong.
- A hybrid governance mode of pro-growth and pluralist elements evolved there.
- The mode reflected economic development pressures and civil society demands.
- There was hybridity between tourism plan-making and planning application systems.

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## ABSTRACT

This paper examines how Hong Kong's political economy influences its local modes of tourism governance and development planning. The study explores how a destination can exhibit a hybrid mode of tourism governance, and also how that emerged in Hong Kong in relation to three phases of socio-economic and tourism development. The three phases are 1842–1966, 1967–1997, and post-1997. Hong Kong's present mode of tourism governance combines pro-growth and pluralist elements. It is affected by the need for capital accumulation and political legitimacy and by the relative influence of government and civil society.

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## 1. Introduction

The notion of governance has become a powerful analytical focus for understanding public policymaking (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992). In its general sense, governance refers to all patterns of power, authority and rule that can secure order, and it is relevant to situations where there is a hierarchical state, where the state depends on others, or where the state plays little or no role (Bramwell, 2011). The governance literature suggests that neo-liberalism and other changing circumstances have meant that the state in recent years often has a diminishing capacity to directly lead in public policies. To achieve collective goals more effectively, governments have had to work with a much wider network of agencies so as to

benefit from their strengths and to access resources (Healey, 2003). Yet a debate remains about the extent to which such developments in governance have affected the state's steering capacity. Some suggest that the state has weakened, but others consider that non-hierarchical governance is often embedded in hierarchical structures, and that government can be effective at steering these networks. Thus, governments can remain a central actor, especially in terms of legitimacy and accountability (Bramwell & Lane, 2010, 2011; Lange, Driessen, Sauer, Bornmann, & Burger, 2013).

A mode of governance involves the processes of mobilizing and coordinating social action (Bramwell & Lane, 2011). It also provides sets of rules in governing arrangements which affect who gets what, where, when, and how in society (Howlett, Rayner, & Tollefson, 2009). The power distribution in a governance mode is a socio-political construction embedded in a political economy, which depends on the actors' socio-economic positions, interests, and values, and how actors' interests and preferences are contested, negotiated and grafted together (Beaumont & Dredge, 2010). Any

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changes in the political economy might alter the actors' influence, values and aspirations and the negotiation processes. The mode of governance will reflect the shifting patterns of perceptions, beliefs and relations among actors in society, as well as the demands of securing capital accumulation and retaining the legitimacy and authority of the governance arrangements (Pierre & Peters, 2005).

There is an emerging interest in how tourism governance varies between destinations, notably according to the differing balance between state intervention and societal autonomy. A few studies have examined the character of tourism governance in specific places, including the character of the governing relations, governing logic, key decision makers and political objectives (Beaumont & Dredge, 2010; Erkuş-Öztürk, 2011; Hall, 2011). A very small number of studies of tourism governance in destinations use typologies of simplified "ideal typical" modes of governance from the political science literature. In these typologies each mode displays its own typical governance characteristics with regard to such features as the participants, objectives, instruments, and outcomes (DiGaetano & Strom, 2003). These typologies can be valuable in identifying differing potential approaches to tourism governance found in destinations. The present paper adds new understanding in this field by exploring in a more sustained way than in previous research the modes of general and tourism governance in a tourist destination.

The study notes that the typologies of modes of governance are "ideal types", so that empirical work is needed to reveal the actual governance relationships in place, such as which elements and processes are evident, which are most important, and whether features of different modes are present (Pierre, 1999). In the real world, one should not be surprised to find tourism governance in one place resembling more than one "ideal type" mode, so there can be "hybrid" forms of governance (Treib, Bähr, & Falkner, 2005). Thus, the evaluation here adds new insights by exploring whether tourism governance in a specific destination resembles specific "ideal type" modes or is more of a hybrid, and also by considering the relationships between the constituent elements of the destination's governance mode, including between the overall governance and the governance of tourism development.

It is also argued that, while "ideal types" of tourism governance can assist heuristically, they do not help us greatly in explaining how and why this governance retains its essential character or evolves over time. This is because "ideal types" of governance modes from the political science literature are primarily analytic rather than causal and predictive (Harding & Blokland, 2014). Thus, the present study evaluates tourism governance using a political economy approach as a broad theoretical perspective that suggests causal processes of temporal continuity and change. Thus, the paper adds new understandings in this field by combining analysis at two levels of abstraction: a more specific level of conceptual analysis of modes of governance, together with a more general level of theoretical analysis using a political economy perspective. This means that stability and change in the modes of overall governance and tourism planning governance in a destination are related to trends in the local political economy.

The article, first, evaluates the extent to which actual governance in a tourist destination resembles specific "ideal type" modes or is more of a hybrid, and also the relationships between the constituent elements of the governance mode in the destination, including between overall governance and the governance of tourism development planning. Second, it evaluates how the mode of tourism governance is affected by the wider context of local political economy; and it shows that the use of historical analysis can help in understanding how the changing political economy may affect the tourism governance mode. Hong Kong is used as the

case study to assess whether its tourism governance has resembled a single or a hybrid mode, how this governance mode has evolved over time, and how continuities and changes in these governance relationships have reflected Hong Kong's political economy.

The paper next reviews relevant literature on governance, typologies of governance modes, and connections between political economy and tourism governance. It then introduces the case study context and the methodology used. Subsequent sections present the study's findings, with discussion of the consequences of Hong Kong's political economy for its general governance modes and tourism development planning.

## 2. Relevant literature and approaches

### 2.1. Governance

Governance concerns "how societies are governed, ruled or steered" (Wang & Bramwell, 2012, p. 988). Traditionally, governments acquire the power to steer. According to Jamal and Getz (1995, p. 193), "no single organization or individual can exert direct control over the destination's development process" because each actor in the tourism sector holds a certain degree of power, resources and access to networks. Collaboration among these actors, therefore, is usually important for governments to achieve their collective goals. Thus, governance is generally seen as involving governmental and non-governmental actors working together collectively, perhaps so as to secure a collective goal or social order (Bramwell & Lane, 2011; Rhodes, 1996). It entails a set of rules and practices, and the outcomes affect who wins and who loses in accessing resources (Howlett et al., 2009).

Governance changes over time as it adapts to evolving societal circumstances, such as because of the shifting influence of influential actors or of hegemonic values (Dredge & Jenkins, 2007). Some commentators also suggest that there has been growing pressure in recent years for more open platforms for discussion and for wider civil society participation in decision-making (Beaumont & Dredge, 2010; Wesley & Pforr, 2010). Campbell, Hollingsworth, and Lindberg (1991) suggest that when pressures for change develop, then actors may engage in trial-and-error search processes within certain limits for alternative governance processes, with this operating through evolutionary variation, selection and retention.

### 2.2. Political economy and tourism governance

Governance can be seen as a crucial part of society's political economy (DiGaetano & Strom, 2003; Jessop, 2008). Political economy as a broad perspective has been widely applied in the social sciences, but it is only occasionally applied to tourism (Bramwell, 2011). It assists in understanding how economic and political conditions help shape power relationships among actors (Jessop, 2008) and how government operates within society (Bramwell, 2011; Jessop, 2008; Pierre, 1999). In this perspective governments are considered to help to regulate society in order to mitigate various economic and social crises and to promote the system's resilience (Bevir, 2009). Such regulation is important as Marx argues that market forces are inherently unstable and lead to capital over-accumulation and unstable social relations (Wang & Bramwell, 2012). Stability in capitalist economic systems is also considered to depend on securing economic returns on capital and on establishing the societal conditions to further this end. Governments also need to maintain political legitimacy in the context of unstable social relations. Without that legitimacy governments can fail to retain the authority required to regulate the economy and maintain social order. Concerns about legitimacy may

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